

## FT Quote

“The American Constitution guarantees freedom of the press through the First Amendment to the Constitution. This is the cornerstone of American political culture. The American media plays a crucial role in defining the American political process. However, the absolute freedoms too are being watched and there are powerful civic conscious organisations that monitor excessive media encroachment into civil liberties and privacy. These are the hallmarks of American democracy firmly grounded in the Constitution. The three pillars of government – Judiciary, Legislature and Executive – function with absolute discretion, respecting each other’s boundaries”

TODAY, 4 July, is American Independence Day, during which Americans celebrate the adoption of the ‘Declaration of Independence’ on 4 July 1776, severing links with Great Britain. Independence Day is a grand celebration for Americans.

The festive atmosphere is adorned with fireworks, street parades and performances, barbecues at family reunions and gatherings, carnivals, fairs and exhibitions, picnics, concerts, and baseball games. Those who cherish American values and accomplishments vent their feelings through political communications in the print and electronic media.

The city mayors and the local and national politicians are busy delivering their political speeches outlining American democracy, history, government, many accomplishments towards advancing the cause of humanity, and traditions at private and public events.

## Freedom of the press in America

The American Constitution guarantees freedom of the press through the First Amendment to the Constitution, which prohibits the government from interfering with the printing and distribution of information and opinion except for some restrictions on defamation, national security and copy right laws.

There are thousands of daily and weekly newspapers in America. Americans enjoy total freedom of expression and thought through the press. This is the cornerstone of American political culture. There are no organised groups or goons who haunt journalists or intuitions of media. There has not been any incidence of violence being perpetrated on journalist or on institutions that nurture free speech.

The American media plays a crucial role in defining the American political process. Cable News Network (CNN) located in Atlanta is the most popular international news channel. American Government operates Voice of America (VOA) for radio and television coverage of global events.

There are other popular American TV channels such as Fox, ABC, Bloomberg, CBS, NBC; these channels play a crucial role in shaping American policy. There are a number of Universities and think tanks dedicated for press freedom and acts as a watchdog.

However, the absolute freedoms too are being watched and there are powerful civic conscious organisations that monitor excessive media encroachment into civil liberties and privacy. The power of organisations in America is so unique that organisations are ever ready to move Judiciary if there is a semblance of media transgression either over privacy or civil liberties.

There are thousands of daily and weekly newspapers and periodicals along with electronic media praising, criticising, castigating, lampooning, ridiculing, caricaturing and debating American domestic and foreign policy.

These are the hallmarks of American democracy firmly grounded in the Constitution. The three pillars of government – Judiciary, Legislature and Executive – function with absolute discretion, respecting each other’s boundaries. One reason why diaspora communities are thriving in these pluralistic societies is that they exploit the free press to engage in adverse propaganda.

## The Cold War

No one would have imagined that Hitler would invade Soviet Union as there had been an explicit diplomatic accord between Soviet Union and Germany guaranteeing non-aggression by either party.

The real motive behind Nazi invasion was to capture oil fields in the caucuses. Hitler never thought that his miscalculation would back fire and in the end – his own suicide. The war cost millions of lives on both sides. Russians fought back valiantly. Americans provided material support to Stalin as American materials (steel plates and other materials) had been an urgent requirement for Soviet war productions.

As D-Day approached, American, Canadians and the Allied Forces mounted a massive beach landing at Normandy and raced towards Germany defeating and dismantling all Hitler’s military power and



Today is American Independence Day

# American diplomacy and global challenges

reached Berlin. Hitler got sandwiched from both sides and defeat was within the grasp of few days. The Soviet Red Army took over Berlin and Allied Forces from the other end.

A moment came when Allied Forces and Red Army came face to face. The instruments of surrender with Nazi regime were executed. The war ended, Americans wanted to deliver relief materials to Berlin under Allied control. Stalin objected and this was the beginning of the Cold War. Stalin demanded war reparations from West Germany. American pragmatism prevailed.

America refused Soviet demands as money was needed for reconstruction and rehabilitation of war-ravaged Germany. Tensions gradually simmered over the years until both countries directed missiles, loaded with nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, at each other’s territory.

By the 1990s political realism prevailed on both sides to end the Cold War when an agreement was signed between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev to reduce nuclear weapons. The brink of nuclear war was thus ended through the triumph of diplomacy.

## Moon landing and American supremacy in technology

The research on science and outer space reached its pinnacle when three Americans Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins, landed on the moon on 20 July 1969. The space program culminated in achieving a key milestone in the race against Soviet Union.

This accomplishment had political connotations as the world was deeply divided over two ideologies. Some countries had leaned on America and others on Soviet Union and there was a distinct competition to gain advantage over the other. The cracks began to appear in the Soviet Union’s economy and she could no longer maintain her internal political stability and finally Soviet Union was dissolved in 1991, thus creating 11 new countries.

Soviet Union was “a country that was the world’s second largest agricultural producer and exporter could no longer feed itself by the 1960s and had to turn to grain imports from its arch rival, the United States” (Political Economy of Stalinism, Gregory, Paul R., CUP, London 2003).

The breakup of the Soviet Union allowed America to emerge as the undisputed world leader in terms of political, economic and military power. The root cause of the collapse of Soviet Union was the over-indulgence in propaganda in projecting the Soviet Union, whereas American system was more reliable, coherent and transparent and American democracy called for public access to information freely. The recent artificial revival of Cold War sentiments in Russia would certainly be a façade to cover up internal weaknesses.

## American culture

American culture describes the diversity of the American nation and how Americans conduct their everyday life. One cannot engage in discussing American culture without pondering about the history and immigration as some of the cultural diversity is embedded in the lifestyles of Americans who have their roots in Ireland, Scotland, England, Europe, Spain and Africa.

However, there are cultures that grew from modern American society. Where there is heavy concentration of one par-



The Declaration of Independence

ticular ethnic group, that area is identified with the cultural background of the ethnic group. From east coast to west coast, America is abound with various cultural patterns.

English is the official language of America at Federal and State levels. There are about 300 languages currently spoken in different regions, mostly by immigrants. Spanish is the official language of American states of Puerto Rico and New Mexico where the majority of people are from Spanish origin.

American music reflects a diverse array of styles often represents the African, Irish, Scottish and Latin traditions. The American music industry is a multibillion dollar industry. American music has had a tremendous impact on the global audience in shaping American values abroad.

The combination of American art, literature, dance, music and social patterns brought a new culture and an industry to the City of Hollywood in California. Hollywood is the core of the American film industry. The film production in California is a thriving business and a major contributor to California’s GDP.

## American corporate franchising and public diplomacy

Coca-Cola is the world’s largest soft drink manufacture which commenced operations in 1886. The brand has captured the world consumers and was synonymous with American politics. It has also run into various social and political controversies.

Coca-Cola came to be the first American investment in Vietnam since the war and truly served to gauge mass opinion towards new American diplomacy. Coca-Cola engaged in track II diplomacy where public opinions are shaped in favour of America.

The Washington Post article by Max Fisher articulates that “diplomacy is a complicated, rigorous process meant to shape public opinion from the ground up by targeting influential elites and opinion-makers; ‘the power of happiness’ is not enough. The Coke video is charming, but even acknowledging that it’s just an advertisement and judging it on those merits seems to make some surprising promises about the power of peace-making by consumerism. The ad quotes Indians and Pakistanis saying, for example, ‘It’s like, this is what we’re supposed to do, right? We are going to take minor steps so that we are going to solve bigger issues.’ Coca-Cola was epitomised by Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) and these American companies symbolise the political and corporate ideologies of

America.”

There are thousands of American iconic firms and brand names with global reach such as Boeing, KFC, McDonalds, Texas Chicken, DHL, Pepsi, Harley Davidson, Ford, Chrysler, General Motors, Caterpillar, Motorola, GE, Google, Xerox, American Express, and Bank of America. The success of these can be attributed to corporate education in America.

The Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree program was first introduced in American universities with an objective of inculcating professional knowledge required to manage businesses. The concept gained currency with the American success story and other universities across the globe commenced MBA programs in line with American curricula.

## Global diplomatic challenges

Today the US is confronted with major diplomatic challenges. Its focus on the ‘War Against Terrorism’ is meant to make the world a better place free from politically motivated violence. Terrorism has caused massive damage to American economy which in turn affected the global economy.

The money spent on anti-terror operations could well have been used for global economic development. The hardest part of American counter-terrorism operations are in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Yemen. The surge in violence in Iraq would be a destabilising factor in the Middle East where American and European business and investments are in jeopardy.

Pakistan is straddled with extremists, as was demonstrated in the Karachi Airport attack, and the Government is engaged in rooting out forces that threaten the very foundation of Pakistan. The rise of militarism would certainly send ripples across the globe.

America is engaged in anti-terror operations whilst Russia and China are on a course to extend their regional hegemony. Russia has annexed Crimea in breach of international law. China has brazenly threatened Japanese territorial integrity by declaring an Air Defence Zone in violation of international law.

China has also engaged in a confrontation with Vietnam over controversial stationing of oil rigs in the disputed South China seas – rich in oil and gas. Russia and China are two authoritarian states that seem to have ignored the international legal norms over their recent actions in Ukraine and Vietnam respectively.

A new alliance seems to be in the offing, in the aftermath of the Russian China

gas deal. Russia is pursuing a policy of reviving Cold War sentiments which have no economic or political value to Russia itself let alone America or Europe. Russia could have gained much by working with America and Europe rather than engaging in bickering. There is huge potential for Russia’s economic development and veering away from America and Europe is bound to be doomed.

America has always been a responsible nation which reacts to anti-democratic actions such as monitoring authoritarian tendencies and engages governments on freedom of speech. It also provides financial and materials assistance to alleviate global poverty through USAID. The American Department of State actively advocates equality, human rights and rule of law across the globe.

There has been a surge in global terrorism especially in Yemen and Iraq. It would be a threat not only to America but to the whole world. If Yemen falls to terrorists, it would threaten commercial shipping as most of the vital shipping lanes are along the Yemeni coast. Global terrorism is not an American war, but a cause for concern for every country and all must be vigilant. A new global convention and a Global Rapid Reaction Force (GRRF) would be needed for counter-terrorism operations.

## American economy

The American economy is the largest in terms of GDP estimated at \$ 14.23 trillion (March 2014). GDP per capita stands at \$ 54,152 (2014). GDP consists of the highly diversified world’s leading high-tech innovator, largest industrial output in the world which includes petroleum, steel, motor vehicles, aerospace, telecommunications, food processing and mining. It has many natural resources.

The American economy is central to global economic development. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, airline and shipping industry suffered massive losses and so did all other airlines and shipping lines across the globe. In every action against America there is bound to be a ripple effect on the global economy. What is important is to ensure that American economy is on a stable footing at all times.

The vibrancy with which America operates its economy and domestic public policy is an unsettling sight for authoritarian states such as Russia and China, where dissent is virtually not seen and suppressed. Now Russia adds to the countries that hate America. Russia had sent military jets dangerously close to American surveillance aircrafts flying over international air space, a clear manifestation of hatred borne out of sanctions imposed by the US and the EU.

Iranian ruling clerics have openly made rather bizarre statements against America whilst moderates are conducting nuclear negotiations. Iran has a huge potential in terms of natural resources and human resources. The country could play an important role in the global trade and development. It must realign its foreign policy.

Do the people of Iran really require a nuclear bomb, thus alienating the country with the rest of the world? No country in the region has threatened Iran and the resolve to possess a nuclear bomb would be an utterly meaningless exercise. Working with the America and the West would be a positive step in the economic development of Iran.

(This writer is a freelance journalist and a political lobbying and government affairs consultant. He is also a registered member of the American Association of Political Consultants)